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Padraic Colum

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The Desert

A Play in Three Acts

By Padraic Colum

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DEVEREUX, NEWTH & CO.,

49 MIDDLE ABBEY STREET, DUBLIN.

1912.



The Desert

A Play in Three Acts

By Padraic Colum

Nieles kann ich ertragen. Die meisten beschwerlichen Dinge
Duld' ich mit ruhigem Mut, wie es ein Gott mir gebeut.
Wenige sind mir jedoch wie Gift und Schlange zuwider;
Biere, Rauch des Tabaks, Wanzen und Knoblauch und —.

Goethe: Veneziansche Epigramme.

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PREFACE.

A week ago I had no intention of publishing "The Desert" in its present form. The production in Dublin of a play called "Kismet" has forced me to make public an interesting case of literary coincidence. Having raised the question, I think it is incumbent upon me to publish "The Desert" in the version presented to two London theatre managers a few years before "Kismet" was made manifest. I have made a few verbal alterations in the play: they do not affect its structure nor idea, and the nature of the changes is indicated in an appendix.

In the summer of 1907 I sent the manuscript of "The Desert" to Mr. Bouchier. At that time the play was in two acts, and the idea, while fully indicated, was not completely worked out. In the spring of 1908 I sent the same manuscript to Mr. Tree: I did not receive it back until the following year. In the meantime I had put "The Desert" into three acts and had carefully worked out its implicit idea. The manuscript of the complete version—the present one—was given to Mr. Tree in the winter of 1908. The first version of the play was received back from Mr. Tree in the spring of 1909, and the present version was returned some time afterwards. In the autumn of 1909 I gave the manuscript to Mr. Herbert Trench, who was then in charge of the Haymarket Theatre. "Sumurun" had not then appeared, and the convention for producing Eastern plays was unknown in London at the time, so I received back my play from the Haymarket within a few months. In the spring of 1911 "Kismet" was produced by Mr. Oscar Asche. Several people—amongst them Mr.

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PREFACE.

W. B. Yeats and Lord Dunsany—who had read the manuscript of “The Desert” and who had seen the production of “Kismet,” were impressed by the correspondences between the two plays. In both, the dramatic fable is concerned with a man’s rise from beggary and his fall into beggary again. The correspondence and fable would not claim much attention, for such a fable has been illustrated in all ages. But in both plays the fable, the setting of the fable, its complications, and its formal presentation, correspond. In both plays the action is complete in a single day, and in both plays the fable is illustrated in the life of the “Arabian Nights.” The beggar Mogu in “The Desert” and the beggar Haj in “Kismet” reach the plenitude of power through the interest which a potentate takes in a daughter of each. In both plays the catastrophe is brought about by a conspiracy to kill a ruler. Curiously enough, it is a lapse in dramatic logic in “Kismet” that makes the most impressive coincidence. In my play the beggar comes out of the desert, and, therefore, to complete the action, it is necessary that he should go back to the desert. The beggar in “Kismet” begins his day by begging on the steps of a mosque in Bagdad. Logically he should return to the steps—actually he goes back to the desert. These literary coincidences are generally brought about by what the theosophists call the “tatwas,” that is, the world-impulses. The end of “Kismet” is interesting as illustrating the compelling power of the “tatwas.”

PADRAIC COLUM.

Dublin, April 5th, 1912.

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ENGLISH

CHARACTERS.

CHOSROES,	...	King of Persia.
NUSEYR,	...	The Court Poet.
KASIM-FERAJ,	...	A Courtier.
SHEDAD,	...	} Chamberlains.
SHEDID,	...	
MENANDER,	...	} Roman Ministers.
HELENUS,	...	
DARIB.	...	A Veteran Soldier.
SELIM,	...	A Young Soldier.
HAFIZ,	...	A Haschish-Eater.
A FRUIT-SELLER.		
CAMP-FOLLOWERS.		
YUNAN,	...	} Three Ethiopian Captives.
DUBAN,	...	
ZAHAL,	...	
SHAKALIK	...	A Camel Driver.
A SPY.		
THE OLD MAN OF THE DESERT.		
FOOD-OF-HEARTS,	...	} Two Slave-Girls.
MOON-OF-LOVE,	...	
GAZELEH,*	...	A Dancing Girl.
MOGU,	...	A Wanderer, father of Gazeleh.
Soldiers, Servants, Attendants, Persian Notables.		
Roman Soldiers.		

* Instead of Gazeleh read Narjis throughout.

The Desert.

THE FIRST ACT.

(A space near a well. It is by the edge of a desert on the confines of the Roman and the Persian Empires. A wall, evidently the ruin of a great structure, crosses the back; it is built of huge blocks of stone. In the middle three steps lead to the top of the wall; the steps are repeated on the other side, so that a person entering at the back is seen to come up the steps. The well is in the centre left, and is surrounded by a low wall. There is a palm tree behind the wall, and beyond it the desert stretches away. A veteran soldier is on guard. A young soldier enters from the right.)

YOUNG SOLDIER. Greeting, veteran. I have come with those who have just brought presents to the King. I would know the ways of the Camp.

THE VETERAN. Mount these steps, and I will show you the ways of the Persian Camp.

(The Veteran and the young soldier go up the steps.)

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. I see the camping place of the soldiers beyond.

THE VETERAN. And on this side there is a camping place also. It is the camping place of the Roman Army.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. Below the Roman camp there are the tents of a third army.

THE VETERAN. It is the army of King Artavades.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. We have nothing more to dread from the Romans.

THE VETERAN. The Romans make a peace with us.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. Then why does the Persian Army stay in this place?

THE VETERAN. We await the return of the Golden Legion, the Company of Nobles whom the

King sent back into the Desert to recover a treasure that the Bedouins carried off.

(The soldiers come down the steps.)

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. O Veteran! Inform me of this. With what intent does the army of King Artavades remain near the Romans?

THE VETERAN. Artavades would guard his own province. He is friendly with the Romans, although he refused to give them his alliance in his war against our King.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. He is of the blood of our King. Is it not so?

THE VETERAN. Artavades stands near the Persian throne.

(A Fruit-seller enters from the left. He has a basket of fruit on his head. He comes before the soldiers. They take slices of cut melon. The Fruit-seller goes off left.)

THE VETERAN. As I look, young soldier, I seem to know your countenance. From what land are you?

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. I come from the City of Ispahan. Selim I am called.

THE VETERAN. I am called Darib. Your father was my friend. I also am from the Beautiful City.

SELIM. O friend of my father! O City of Ispahan!

DARIB. I am on guard here for years that are half your age.

SELIM. Were I back in Ispahan I would be well off. My father is a merchant, and chief among the merchants of the City. He would be glad to see my countenance. He would give me bales to trade with.

DARIB. Your father and my friend has gathered wealth in the latter years.

SELIM. He has many bales in his shop, and I think the price of each is a thousand pieces of gold. I would go into a far country and sell the bales for double the price. That would be two thousand pieces of gold for each bale.

DARIB. There is a great wealth in two thousand pieces of gold.

SELIM. And I have an uncle who is a merchant, also. When I would come back prosperous, my father

would take me to his brother's house and induce my uncle to give me his daughter in marriage.

DARIB. You have prospects, Selim!

SELIM. Verily we would not leave my uncle's house until my uncle's daughter was given to me.

DARIB. And a share of your uncle's trade should go with the damsel.

SELIM. I think that would be just. I would have a great household then. I would have houses and slaves, shops and caravans, and I would be happy with the daughter of my uncle.

DARIB. I do not think the army will return.

SELIM. What do you say?

DARIB. I do not think the army will return. When the Romans go back to their own country we will fall on Artavades and punish him.

SELIM. Woe, indeed!

DARIB. We will carry war into Artavades' country.

SELIM. Alas, our separation from the Beautiful City.

(Selim bows his head. Some Camp-followers gather in by right.)

A CAMP FOLLOWER. O Darib!

DARIB. I listen to you!

ANOTHER CAMP FOLLOWER. We have heard that our master makes peace with the Romans.

DARIB. It is true.

THIRD CAMP FOLLOWER. We will return to our own land, Darib!

DARIB. Let you ask the soothsayers.

A CAMP FOLLOWER. A man has come into the camp.

ANOTHER CAMP FOLLOWER. A man has come into the Camp; a man who can make calculations.

DARIB. Let us make offering so that a worse enemy than the Romans may not rise up before us.

CAMP FOLLOWERS. The man can tell us, Darib.

OTHERS. He cannot. He's a vagabond.

CAMP FOLLOWERS. He has the Book.

OTHERS. He was stealing in the Camp.

CAMP FOLLOWERS. It is certain he has knowledge.

OTHERS. He sent his daughter to steal. He has the marks of a beating on him.

CAMP FOLLOWERS. Lo, there he comes!

(Mogu is seen on the steps behind. The upper part of his body shows him to be lean and tall. He has a scanty beard. His eyes are quick and searching. He stands for a while taking in the scene, and then crosses to the second step on the near side. He carries a staff in his hand.)

MOGU. A fair and friendly greeting to ye all, O brothers of the Persians. I am Mogu, the Wanderer, the Possessor of the Book. (He comes down amongst them.) This is indeed a fair place for the assembly; the air is serene. It is like the air outside the palaces of kings.

SELIM. Do you foretell events?

MOGU. Young master, I read in the Book.

DARIB. And what is the Book?

MOGU. It is the Book of the Hidden Treasures, my lord!

A CAMP FOLLOWER. What fortune can you foresee for me?

MOGU. A fortune of the best. There is a damsel thinking of you, and she is dark. But I would have you beware, you have enemies to the right and you have enemies to the left.

ANOTHER CAMP FOLLOWER. And what fortune have I, Mogu?

MOGU. According to the Book there are two occasions on which one may with safety reveal the mysteries. The first is before he has eaten, and the second is after he has eaten. It is now time for me to eat. Have any of you seen my daughter?

CAMP FOLLOWER. I have seen her.

MOGU. She has our provisions. But it does not matter. I will eat with you. Let us share provisions.

CAMP FOLLOWER. There is no provisions with us, Mogu.

MOGU. A crust of bread itself confers the obligation of bread and salt.

CAMP FOLLOWER. There is none amongst us that has a crust of bread.

MOGU. It is necessary for me to eat before I begin the calculation.

A CAMP FOLLOWER. Will you have a melon-peel, Mogu?

MOGU. Even a melon-peel, my son.

(They hand him a melon-peel; he eats.)

MOGU. It seems to me as I watch you that divers fortunes overhang you all. You, young man, have been beaten once, and I fear you will be beaten again, for there is hatred to the right of you and hatred to the left of you.

A CAMP FOLLOWER. He speaks truth.

MOGU. While as for you, many women have refused you, but in the end they will go to you with alacrity.

THE MAN SPOKEN TO. Is that true, Mogu?

MOGU. I have said it. And as for you, you have lacked money always.

A CAMP FOLLOWER. That is true, Mogu.

MOGU. Yet the Book says that he who shall persistently follow the smell of the oil, shall finally come to the place where there is light. But I will speak no more of the future.

(He takes a stick from the loin-cloth and holds it before him.)

MOGU. And now I would ask you to give attention to the thing I hold in my hand.

A CAMP FOLLOWER. It is a little stick.

MOGU. A little stick, as you say, but yet the most extraordinary among sticks. Do you observe how one end is pointed and one end is flattened?

CAMP FOLLOWER. Surely, it is so.

MOGU. Suppose I whirl it in the air, on which end will it fall do you think? The pointed end or the flattened end?

A CAMP FOLLOWER. The pointed end.

(Mogu throws the stick in the air.)

MOGU. Young man, foresight is with you. I throw the stick again. On which end will it fall, young man?

CAMP FOLLOWER. On the pointed end.

MOGU. And what stake do you put on the turn of the stick?

CAMP FOLLOWER. I put no stake.

MOGU. This man has no reliance on his own judgment. And it is such as he who are in charge of the asses of the Camp. Dare you subject your judgment to a stake.

ANOTHER CAMP FOLLOWER. It comes on the pointed end. I stake a copper coin.

MOGU. Your destiny, if you but knew it, is worth more than a copper coin. You have the judgment of Aristotle, whom Darius appointed as Vizier to his son, Alexander.

THE CAMP FOLLOWER. Was Alexander then the son of Darius?

MOGU. The Book itself says that Darius was the father of Alexander. Look soldiers, the stick has fallen on the blunted end. Who can foresee the working of the law—give me the coin.

CAMP FOLLOWER. I have no coin to give.

MOGU. What does he say. Look soldiers, see how the stick has fallen.

ANOTHER CAMP FOLLOWER. You have the mark of the beating, Mogu.

MOGU. Behold, this man brings disgrace on you all! Behold, he is going away!

CAMP FOLLOWER. Make the calculation, Mogu.

MOGU. The calculation would tell me what I know already, that ye are dirt and that the lash will fall on ye.

CAMP FOLLOWERS. Hear the vagabond.

SELIM. Stay, Mogu; make the calculation.

MOGU. There are three preventatives to the calculation. It must not be made amongst women, amongst black slaves, nor amongst those who pay not their debts.

THE CAMP FOLLOWER (who has gone aside). Here, Mogu, is one for your skill. Hafiz, the Haschish-eater.

MOGU (to Hafiz). Good sir, it is well that men have Haschish to eat.

HAFIZ. Are you an eater of the Haschish?

MOGU. My master, do you see this little stick?

HAFIZ. Verily, it is a stick, and little.

MOGU. If I whirl it in the air on which end will it fall?

HAFIZ. Things always fall on the narrow end.

(Mogu throws the stick.)

MOGU. Good master, you have lost. Who amongst us knows the way of a stick in the air. A coin! (Hafiz gives him a coin.) I throw the stick again.

A CAMP FOLLOWER. It falls on the blunted end.

MOGU. You have lost, young man.

CAMP FOLLOWER. Here, then, is the coin.

MOGU. You are amongst those of whom it is written "They do not say 'Let ye wait another day.' " They pay on the stroke. Again the stick is in the air.

A CAMP FOLLOWER. It falls on the blunted end.

MOGU. Behold, it is as the man said. (He turns to Selim.) My young master spoke of a calculation. The hour is auspicious.

THE CAMP FOLLOWER (who has won). Give me the coin.

MOGU. The coin!

SOME CAMP FOLLOWERS (truculently). The stake. Give him the stake.

MOGU. What lack of mind there is here! There was no stake.

CAMP FOLLOWERS. Give him the coin.

MOGU. Brothers of the Persians, is this to be permitted?

DARIB. He is a vagabond. Let them drive him from this.

SELIM. But the calculation——

MOGU (turning to Selim). The young lord spoke of the calculation.

DARIB. Do not interfere, Selim.

(He goes to the right. Selim goes with him.)

CAMP FOLLOWERS. Give out the coin or we beat you.

MOGU (putting his back against the wall of the well). Would ye touch one who possesses the Book and who is acquainted with the incantations?

A CAMP FOLLOWER. We will put more stripes on your back.

(He lashes out at Mogu with a camel-whip.)

MOGU (with ferocity). Back from me, dogs!

(He retreats towards right, facing the aggressors. One of the Camp Followers takes up a handful of sand and throws it towards Mogu's eyes. He gives a cry of ferocity. Two people are entering right.)

DARIB. The king! The king! Have you no manners, outcasts? The king!

(He goes amongst them, striking out with his spear. Mogu and the Camp Followers fall back.)

(Chosroes enters with Nuseyr, the Court Poet. He has a dark, wavy Syrian beard, and is in military dress. Nuseyr is elaborately dressed. He carries a green parrot on his shoulder, held by a silver chain.)

CHOSROES (to Selim). Who are these who make contentions?

SELIM. O my lord, they are only Camp followers.

CHOSROES. Is there one who will speak for them?

(Mogu comes round the wall. He stands before the king, prostrating himself.)

MOGU. What will I say unto the King?

CHOSROES. Who is this?

MOGU. I am Mogu, the Wanderer, my lord!

CHOSROES. Have you aught to say, Mogu?

MOGU. Who is there to judge of the poor man? If he states his case and proves himself wronged, who is there that will admit his plea?

CHOSROES. This man his discourse.

NUSEYR. It is certain he can speak.

MOGU. Alas for the poor man! How could you know his condition. In the market he is mocked at, and in the street he is set upon and beaten. When he is absent he is not remembered amongst mankind, and when he is present he has no share in their pleasures. He fails to earn his food in the summer, and in the winter he is without fire or food.

CHOSROES. Excellently does he speak.

MOGU. In the market place the poor man shuns the notice and in the desert he pours forth his tears.

NUSEYR. He speaks excellently. I could listen to him only for the smell.

CHOSROES. The wind blows from him to us, therefore let him be taken away.

(Mogu goes back to the well. He sits down, his back to the wall. Darib and Selim go off by steps.)

CHOSROES. Does my poet observe this man?

NUSEYR. I observe that he is our old acquaintance, the naked man.

CHOSROES. He is a lesson for those who would be admonished.

NUSEYR. Too obvious a lesson, my lord. But my parrot has never looked on his like. Shiraz, my beauty, look on Mogu, the naked man. So we are all born, Shiraz, so we all are stripped of robe and crown, of court and harem.

CHOSROES. I will have that parrot strangled, Nuseyr.

NUSEYR. Why, my lord?

CHOSROES. That our Roman friends may not gossip of Persian levity.

(Helenus and Menander, the Roman ministers, enter by the steps. They bow before the king.)

HELENUS. I have searched a city to find our Emperor two canaries who could sing on the one note.

NUSEYR. Two such canaries, Helenus, must sing of security and peace. Therefore, is not the end of conquest and empire to produce two canaries who can sing on the one note?

HELENUS. I almost agree with you, Nuseyr.

CHOSROES. Is this peace acceptable in Rome, Helenus?

HELENUS. A peace between Rome and Persia must rejoice mankind, my lord. We in Rome believe that the world is destined to come under the control of the two Empires—Rome and Persia.

CHOSROES. A peace between the two Empires must make for the happiness of mankind. We pray

that the peace may be eternal. The Treaty is written out in Persian and Roman writing, and Shedad will hand it to you when we go back to our pavilion. We will present you with a robe of honour, Helenus.

NUSEYR. Let it be on account of his epic, my lord.

CHOSROES. Has Helenus written an epic?

NUSEYR. Helenus is a poet, my lord.

HELENUS. My epic is only in part composed, my lord.

CHOSROES. What is the subject of the epic, Helenus?

HELENUS. As your Majesty is aware, in a long poem the subject is of the first importance. I have selected my subject with great care. It is the war with the Dacians, an action now sufficiently remote to be a fit subject for an epic.

CHOSROES. Is the poem far advanced, Helenus?

HELENUS. Not far. The parts composed have been read in various circles. The readings have always been attended by the best people. As much of the epic as has been made public has been well received.

MENANDER. Be careful that your epic is not stolen, Helenus.

NUSEYR. I have heard that there is in Rome a freedman who has put forward your work as his own.

HELENUS. I have heard of the fellow. Does not his name reek of garlic?

NUSEYR. Silence, Helenus. The law forbids that his name be mentioned.

CHOSROES. We hope to hear of your epic again, Helenus.

(Chosroes goes to the steps. He stands on the second step and remains looking out into the desert.)

MENANDER. Surely the King is abstracted.

NUSEYR. There is much on his mind, Menander.

MENANDER. We are aware that his munificence has projected the building of the new city.

HELENUS. A city for the poets and philosophers. Is it not so, Nuseyr?

NUSEYR. The King has intentions of re-building Shira as his sacred city.

MENANDER. That is when the treasure carried off by the Bedouins has been recovered.

NUSEYR. Always you are well informed, Menander. The King will rebuild the city with the recovered treasure. But it is not the project of the city that troubles his Majesty.

HELENUS. May we know the cause of his abstraction?

NUSEYR. In a measure I am to blame for the trouble that has come to the King.

HELENUS. We are deeply interested, Nuseyr.

NUSEYR. I shall inform you of the whole affair. Know that I am engaged on a delightful composition which I call the Book of the Beauties. In this poem I have set forth the beauties who have come to the harems of the King of Persia, and who have been memorable for some curious grace or charm. I have had the audacity——

HELENUS. To refrain from mention of the Queen?

NUSEYR. Nay, Helenus, I sinned by mentioning her name and certain of her peculiar charms. The Queen has secluded herself from his Majesty, and will not draw nigh him until assurance is given to her that my poem has perished.

MENANDER. His Majesty will not give this assurance.

HELENUS. His Majesty is a disinterested lover of poetry.

NUSEYR. Chosroes has not asked me to destroy my poem, but, in our favourite Eastern phrase, the bosom of the King is contracted.

(Mogu, who has been seated in the shadow of the well-head, rises. He stoops to pick up some melon-peels; Shedid, one of the court chamberlains, is entering hurriedly from the left. He buffets Mogu out of the way. Mogu gives him a look of hatred. As he is going off left he gets into the way of Shedad, the other court chamberlain, who is entering. Shedad pushes Mogu aside, and strikes him with his staff. Both chamberlains stand before the King prostrating themselves.)

CHOSROES (still on the steps). Let this man be brought before me.

(Shedad and Shedid bring Mogu before the King.)

CHOSROES. You have called yourself Mogu. Is there aught else that may describe you, a town or a trade?

MOGU. I am the son of the desert, my lord.

CHOSROES. Where do you get your sustenance?

MOGU. To-day I had a melon-peel to gnaw.

CHOSROES. Have you stories, Mogu?

MOGU. Only such stories as would divert the camel-drivers, my lord?

CHOSROES. Perhaps you are a musician.

MOGU. No, my lord.

CHOSROES. Yet, you wanderers have ways of making diversion.

MOGU. I dance the Ostrich dance.

NUSEYR. Will your Majesty bring Mogu to the pavilion?

CHOSROES. I will have him dance here before us.

(Mogu commences the dance. It is a whirling of the arms and an awkward shuffling with the feet. He throws himself down on the sand and begins to twist round. As he is on the ground. Narjis, his daughter, enters left. She stands still.)

NARJIS. O! my father.

(Mogu rises, and ends the dance, swaying about.)

CHOSROES. Who is the damsel?

MOGU. She is the Wanderer's child, my lord.

CHOSROES. Can she dance?

MOGU. She has been trained to dance the Bubble Dance.

NUSEYR. Bid her dance for us, my lord.

CHOSROES. I would have the damsel dance.

(Gazelah dances. The King applauds.)

CHOSROES. What do you say of her, Nuseyr.

NUSEYR. She is quick and graceful like the daughter of the desert.

CHOSROES. Do you not commend her, then.

NUSEYR. I would like to see her dressed in a skirt of red inwoven with gold, and with sandals upon her

feet. The vest should be of pale blue slashed and open and embroidered with pearls. Then she should have gold coins in her hair.

CHOSROES. I had a dream last night——

NUSEYR. Dressed thus she would make a pretty cup-bearer.

CHOSROES. A cup-bearer!

NUSEYR. What is your name, damsel?

GAZELEH. Gazeleh, my lord.

NUSEYR. Let these coins be in your hair, Gazeleh.

GAZELEH. O my lord!

CHOSROES. Nuseyr, bid her dance again.

NUSEYR. The King would have you dance again,
O gazelle of the sand hills.

(Gazeleh dances. The King watches her eagerly.)

CHOSROES. What do you say now, Nuseyr?

NUSEYR. I think she is pretty.

CHOSROES. No more than pretty?

NUSEYR. I cannot say that she is more than pretty.

(Gazeleh stands still before the King. Shedad prostrates himself.)

SHEDAD. The falcons, O King!

CHOSROES. What does the man say?

NUSEYR. What is it, Shedad?

SHEDAD. The falcons that were sent as a present to the King have arrived at the pavilion.

NUSEYR. The falcons! These are the snowy falcons from the Mountain of Lebanon. O my lord, may we not go to the pavilion to see the birds?

CHOSROES. Shall we not see Gazeleh dance again?

NUSEYR. There is nothing wonderful in the girl, but the falcons—the snowy falcons! Come, my lord.

CHOSROES (reluctantly). How shall we reward Gazeleh?

NUSEYR. She has the string of coins.

CHOSROES. Let us get back to the pavilion.

(The King, Helenus, the Officers and the Guards go off. Nuseyr stays to speak to Gazeleh.)

NUSEYR. Farewell, Gazelle of the sand hills!

GAZELEH. Farewell, my lord!

HELENUS. We could have presented you with falcons from the Western Islands.

NUSEYR. Ah, but snowy falcons, falcons from the Mountain of Lebanon! I shall work them into my poem.

(The Court goes off, Nuseyr with it. Gazeleh stands looking after the Court.)

GAZELEH. They are gone. I remember the words in the song:

I perceive it was only a dream, the thought that came to me,

The thought that the desert was passed, that we were on the couches.

I thought we had dainty food, that singing and wine were around,

And I thought that my lord had said sweet words to his slave girl.

It was only a dream, I perceive, and the desert is round us.

(Mogu comes to her.)

MOGU. This is our lucky day. This is the day of my life. This shall be called Mogu's day. Coins in a string, the juggler with the parrot bestowed upon my daughter.

GAZELEH. O my father, will they return?

MOGU. Let us be far away lest they should. Come on.

GAZELEH. The King may remember me.

MOGU. Let us hope the son of the parrot may not remember his coins. Come on. But give the coins to me that I may place them in obscurity.

GAZELEH. O my father, wait.

MOGU. My heart is hungry to reckon the coins.

GAZELEH. The King looked upon me when the coins were in my hair. He might return, and not seeing the coins, would not notice me again.

MOGU. What is this? Give the coins to me lest the soldiers see them.

(Gazeleh puts her hands over the coins.)

MOGU. Let us hasten out of this or they will fall upon us and beat us. They would all beat us, the viziers, the captains, the soldiers, the camp followers,

And now indeed we should be careful, for our good fortune must have wakened the jealousy of my evil genius. Come on.

(Gazeleh goes.)

MOGU. We will go into a town far from the Camp; we will have fowl, fish, meat, and white bread.

(Gazeleh stops.)

MOGU. Come on. We will have wine and entertainment. The jesters humpbacks will perform before us.

GAZELEH. O stay, I hear a call!

MOGU. Then give me the coins.

(Gazeleh breaks from him. The King enters on the right.)

GAZELEH. O my lord!

(She runs to the King.)

MOGU. He who has a daughter has distress and anxiety indeed. Behold, I am once again under the power of fortune.

(Hafiz the Haschish-eater comes on by left.)

HAFIZ. Hail, brother!

MOGU. Greeting, Haschish-eater!

MOGU. Cast no spells, have no envious thought, wish not for the evil eye, the hour of Mogu approaches.

HAFIZ. The hour of my sobriety approaches, also.

MOGU. Hush, the King comes with the Wanderer's child.

(Chosroes and Gazeleh draw near.)

CHOSROES. Further, according to my dreams, I would escape a peril by wedding you.

GAZELEH. By wedding me, my lord!

CHOSROES. I find you fairer than the daughters of kings.

GAZELEH. I am my lord's handmaiden.

CHOSROES. I would wed you as I would wed the daughter of a king.

GAZELEH. O my lord.

(They go slowly back. They stop.)

MOGU. O my protecting genius, thou has brought me to a fortunate hour! He takes her as he would the daughters of a king; he weds with Mogu's issue, he makes Mogu the parent of a line of kings. Stand .

and be haughty, Mogu. Be fierce, Mogu! Tremble and be abashed, my enemies! Dogs lick the dust before Mogu's feet!

HAFIZ. What does your Haschish say to you, Mogu?

MOGU. I am making an alliance with the King.

HAFIZ. Art thou lending him armies?

MOGU. I am giving my daughter in marriage to the King.

HAFIZ. Art thou giving a dowry with thy daughter?

MOGU. No, but I am getting a bride price for my daughter.

HAFIZ. And what bride price will you get, Mogu?

MOGU. O stupified one, what bride price would a king give?

HAFIZ. He will make you a lord of the Empire.

MOGU. He will make me the greatest of the lords of the Empire. Medea shall be under me for a year, and Assyria for the year after. Bactriane I can give away, and Yemen shall be my place of pleasure.

HAFIZ. O Mogu, my lord, a boon.

MOGU. What boon will you crave?

HAFIZ. Give me the women of Yemen to be my slave-women.

MOGU. I will have enough to do with you, Haschish-eater.

HAFIZ. Then Shedad and Shedid are more generous than you.

MOGU. I will have Shedad hanged, and I will hang Shedid also.

HAFIZ. O my lord, take their daughters in marriage first.

MOGU. Ha! have the Chamberlains daughters?

HAFIZ. Shedad has a daughter, and she is a wonder. There is none like her in the gardens of Eternity.

MOGU. I have never seen the daughters of the rich.

HAFIZ. She is like the moon on the night of its fullness. She will be displayed before you robed in silks of China. Lo, the nurses bring her in. Her eyes are bordered with kohl, her nails are stained with henna. Lo, they withdraw the veils and the outer garments; her hair falls out of its tower. Behold the shower of pearls, and see there are jewels along her breasts.

MOGU. By my protecting genius, I will marry this damsel.

HAFIZ. Will you not look on her, my lord?

MOGU. I will wed her, I tell you, but afterwards I will manifest no love towards her on account of the enmity I have for her father.

HAFIZ. Alas for the bride, the poor bride!

MOGU. Mogu will be haughty to his enemies, he will take their daughters for a time, but themselves he will have beaten with sticks.

HAFIZ. Lo, the King goes with the bride.

(Chosroes and Gazeleh move towards right.)

(Mogu throws down his staff and goes after them.)

MOGU. My lord, my lord! Mogu calls my lord. Mogu, the bride's father! The bride's father entreats a word, my lord. Even a gift, my lord.

(Chosroes and Gazeleh go without giving any attention to Mogu. Mogu stands looking after them.)

HAFIZ. Mogu, Mogu, Mogu!

(Mogu comes back and picks up the staff.)

MOGU. Begone, slave!

HAFIZ. You are Mogu.

MOGU. Tell me who else I am.

HAFIZ. You are a lord of the Empire.

MOGU. My daughter has wedded the King. Is it not so?

HAFIZ. You have given your daughter in marriage to the King.

MOGU. Then I will stay here until the King sends for me.

(The Camp followers come on. Mogu pays no attention to them.)

FIRST CAMP FOLLOWER. Ha, here is Mogu.

SECOND CAMP FOLLOWER. Here is the vagabond.

MOGU. Have ye not been sufficiently whipped?

THIRD CAMP FOLLOWER. Does the dog talk to us like this?

FOURTH CAMP FOLLOWER. Let us beat him now.

MOGU. If ye draw nearer I will have ye tortured.

(The Camp followers hesitate.)

FIRST CAMP FOLLOWER. Is it not Mogu who talks to us like this?

(He makes a rush. Mogu shakes the staff.)

SECOND CAMP FOLLOWER. Brothers, fall on the vagabond and beat him.

(They advance, making noise. Shedad enters.)

MOGU. Have you a message for me, my lord?

SHEHAD. A message for you, vagabond?

MOGU. Does the King send a message?

SHEHAD. Is it to such a one as you?

MOGU. Know, O Shedad, that the King has wed my daughter.

SHEHAD. Verily, truth has departed from amongst men.

MOGU. The King has wed my daughter as he would wed the daughters of kings.

SHEHAD. What will be done with this man? His forehead is of brass, or else it is of rock, and cut from the threshold of the synagogue of the Jews. He is not ashamed of anything he says to the servants of the King.

(Shedid enters.)

SHEHAD. Brother, this one says that the King has wed his daughter.

SHEHAD. The Dancing Girl in the Pavilion of the King.

MOGU. Thou hast a message for me, Shedid?

SHEHAD. I do not bear messages to such as you.

MOGU. You have gifts for me, Shedid.

SHEHAD. I have no gifts for you.

MOGU. You say this by way of discussion, but you have come to bid me to the Pavilion of the King.

SHEHAD. This man becomes wearisome.

MOGU. You have the coins for me, at least?

SHEHAD. I have no coins.

MOGU. Speak truth, Shedid.

SHEHAD. Does this man challenge me.

MOGU. Give me the coins and I will stay here.

SHEHAD. I have no coins.

MOGU. You have the string of coins. I tell you give them to me.

SHEDID. I will have you beaten.

MOGU. You have stolen the coins.

SHEDAD. You must be beaten.

MOGU. Give me the coins, you robbers.

SHEDID. Beat him on the back and on the belly and drive him from the Camp.

(Shedid and Shedad go off. The Camp followers gather round Mogu. One of them mounts the ridge and cries, "O ye, O ye, O ye who would see a vagabond beaten, come here, come here.")

MOGU. Beware of touching me, jackalls.

(The crowd around him, mocking him.)

FIRST CAMP FOLLOWER. The King has taken Mogu's daughter. La, la, la, la, la.

SECOND CAMP FOLLOWER. The King has married Mogu's daughter. La, la, la, la, la.

THIRD CAMP FOLLOWER. The King has married Mogu's daughter as he would wed the daughter of kings.

MOGU. Listen to what I will say to you. You are dogs, your fathers were dogs, and dogs, also, were your grandsires. Ye are the lice of the Camp, and with my staff only will I touch ye.

(They close in Mogu, there is a struggle. Finally they overpower him and throw him on the ground.)

FIRST CAMP FOLLOWER. Throw him into the desert.

SECOND CAMP FOLLOWER. Drag him on his face towards the rocks.

(They drag him to the rocks. They catch hold on him and throw him into the desert. The Camp followers stand about, laughing.)

END OF FIRST ACT.

THE SECOND ACT.

(As in previous act. Mogu is lying asleep in the shade made by the wall round the well. Selim is seated on the steps. A flower-seller enters left and comes before Selim. Selim takes some fruit.)

THE FRUIT-SELLER (by way of gossip). Has my master seen the falcons that were sent as presents to the King?

SELIM. I have not seen them, fruit-seller.

THE FRUIT-SELLER. I have seen them, my master, and they are white exceedingly.

SELIM. They come from the Mountàin of Lebanon, and they are called the snowy falcons.*

THE FRUIT-SELLER. I have heard that their claws are of silver.

SELIM. Do not credit that, fruit-seller.

(The fruit-seller puts the basket on his head, and then stands watching the sleeping Mogu.)

THE FRUIT-SELLER. Is not this the man who came into the Camp yesterday?

SELIM. It is Mogu. The King has taken his daughter, they say, but the man has been repudiated.

THE FRUIT-SELLER. This man dances the Ostrich Dance.

SELIM. Then I will awaken him and have him dance before us.

(He takes up a stone and casts it at Mogu. Mogu does not awaken. Hafiz, the Haschish-eater, enters on the right. His face is white and his eyes glazed. His turban is torn and his robe tattered. He crosses and stands looking at Mogu. Selim casts a stone again.)

HAFIZ. O my brother, who is the man whom you would awaken?

SELIM. It is the juggler who came into the Camp, yesterday.

HAFIZ. Why would you awaken him, my brother?

SELIM. I would have him dance the Ostrich Dance.

HAFIZ. And will a man who has been awakened dance?

SELIM. Mogu will dance for the gain of a date.

(Hafiz goes to Mogu and stands watching him.)

SELIM. Haschish-eater, are you yourself awake?

HAFIZ (looking before him). How strange is the scene upon which my soul gazes!

SELIM (mockingly). O fruit-seller, how strange is the scene! Behold the well and the camel-track!

HAFIZ. The powers of Alexander were gathered here, and beyond are rubbish-heaps that are the remains of Babylon.

SELIM. When were the armies of Alexander gathered round this place?

HAFIZ. A thousand years after the revel of Sardanapalus.

(The fruit-seller runs to Hafiz, holding the basket in his hands.)

THE FRUIT-SELLER. Speak to me concerning Sardanapalus.

HAFIZ. Below one of the rubbish heaps is a painted chamber, and there Sardanapalus revelled on a night. A slave called me out of sleep and caught me by the hand, and we went down the stairs. I heard the voices of the singing-women. I knew that the King was dead, and that those within would make me king, after Sardanapalus, but the door would not open.

(The fruit-seller puts the basket on his head and looks round at Selim.)

SELIM. Speak to me concerning Alexander!

HAFIZ. I sat by Alexander's couch and told him about India, for I had journeyed down all her rivers. I slept outside his tent, and a captain called to me. The blue lotus was in my hand, and I rose to show Alexander the veins that led into the heart of the world. Then a star fell. I heard them say that Alexander had gone hence.

(Mogu awakens. He raises his head.)

HAFIZ. I will talk no more concerning Alexander nor Sardanapalus.

(He goes out left.)

SELIM. He is a Haschish-eater. I knew such a one in Ispahan.

THE FRUIT-SELLER. Does my master come from Ispahan?

SELIM. I have drawn the breath of the Beautiful City.

(Mogu turns his back and feigns sleep. He snores loudly.)

THE FRUIT-SELLER. I had a brother, and it was said of him that he went as far as Ispahan, but I never saw my brother.

SELIM (casting a stone at Mogu.) Ho, Mogu, awake!

(Mogu sits up.)

MOGU. It is the young noble! My master, I have been dreaming of you. Now that I look upon you it seems to me that my lord is from Ispahan.

SELIM. How is that known to you?

MOGU. My lord is comely and most like to the youths of Ispahan.

SELIM. Were you in Ispahan, Mogu?

MOGU (pointing to his upturned feet). Behold these feet! Were I to deny their acquaintance with the streets of Ispahan, the nails would drop off their toes. O Ispahan! O City where she who is remembered lived and died!

SELIM. You refer to Sheereen the Beautiful?

MOGU. To Sheereen and to none other.

SELIM. Then the stories told in the streets of Ispahan are known to you.

MOGU. O ravenous belly, cease to prey upon me so that I remember the choicest of the stories and relate them to this friendly noble.

SELIM. O fruit-seller, give Mogu to eat and I will recompense you.

(The fruit-seller brings the basket to Mogu. He puts both hands in and takes out dates.)

SELIM. Relate unto me some of the tales of Ispahan.

MOGU (devouring the dates). Assuredly I will relate

them to you, for none is more worthy to hear them than my master.

(Selim stands on the step and calls out, "O, ye who would hear the stories of Ispahan, come here, come here!")

(People come in from the left, the right, and by the steps. Mogu remains seated by the well devouring the dates.)

SELIM (to the people). The story-teller will sit on the step and ye shall gather round him.

(Mogu rises to his feet.)

MOGU. If there are any here unworthy let them go hence, for the stories in my keeping are related only in the presence of the noble.

SELIM. To the steps, O story-teller!

(Mogu moves towards the steps. He takes his seat on the second step, and the crowd gather round him. He remains for a while looking thoughtfully before him; then he beats his breast.)

SELIM. What of the story, Mogu?

MOGU. I am distracted striving to imagine a story that would be acceptable to you all.

SELIM. Relate unto us the story of Sheereen the Beautiful.

MOGUE. The story of Sheereen the Beautiful! It is happy for ye that my benefactor calls for a story so delightful. It is happy for ye that there is before ye one who has in his mind the story of Sheereen the Beautiful. It is a story to be engraved on plates of gold and kept in the treasure-house of kings.

SELIM. We crave of you to let us hear the story of Sheereen the Beautiful.

MOGU. There was a king of Yemen so anxious to possess the story of Shereen the Beautiful that he sent messengers into the cities of China, to converse with travellers of the world, so that the messengers might, perchance, meet one who carried in his mind the story of Sheereen.

SELIM. But what of the story?

A BYSTANDER. He knows nought of the story!

SELIM. Relate unto us the story of Sheereen the Beautiful.

MOGU. Only to your own ears will I relate it, for there are some here unworthy to hear the story.

SELIM. O Mogu, art thou an imposter in this also?

MOGU. Nay, but there are some here who would use the story against me.

SELIM. Then relate one of the familiar tales of Ispahan.

MOGU. There is no harm in that. Which of the familiar tales will I relate to the friends of my benefactor?

A BYSTANDER. Relate unto us the story of the Slave and the Sultan.

MOGU. The story of the Slave and the Sultan! Then give heed to me, O friends of my benefactor.

ANOTHER BYSTANDER. Our hearing has crept nigh to you, O story-teller.

(They come close to Mogu.)

MOGU. There was once a Sultan, and he had in his house a favourite slave.

SELIM. Nay.

MOGU. There was once a Sultan and he had in his house a favourite slave.

SELIM. Nay. There was once a Sultan who had in his house one who was the most despicable of slaves.

MOGU. I will let my master relate the story in the way that is pleasing to himself.

(Selim mounts a step higher than Mogu and proceeds to hold forth.)

SELIM. Hear me, my friends, and give heed to the story of the Slave and the Sultan! There was once a Sultan who had in his palace one who was the most despicable of slaves, and it came to the ear of the Sultan that this slave dreamt he sat in the master's seat. So, to divert himself, the Sultan caused bang to be placed in the slaves food, and while he slept they arrayed the slave in the robes of the Sultan and placed him on the master's seat.

(The audience approve of the tale. Selim goes on eagerly.)

SELIM. So when this most despicable of slaves

awakened on the world he was saluted as Sultan. And one courtier would make obeisance to him, and say, "The slave girl whom my lord ordered to be procured hath arrived, and the broker swears that the ten thousand pieces of gold do not suffice to pay for the dress and the ornaments she has on."

(The audience laugh heartily. Selim pauses to laugh, and then goes on.)

SELIM. And another courtier would say, "Presents from the King of India hath arrived! Will my lord deign to cast an eye upon them?"

(Selim laughs immoderately. The audience, carried away, laugh. Mogu remains silent.)

SELIM. At last this most despicable of slaves was persuaded that he was Sultan, and he gave orders, and for a time these orders were carried out. But the courtiers at last grew weary of this diversion, and one said, "O thou unlucky," and plucked the beard of the slave. Then they fell upon him and tormented him, and at last they yoked him to the mill as a bull, and forced him to grind corn for a night and a day.

(Selim and the audience laugh again. Mogu remains silent. Shedad and Shedid enter left. They stand unperceived by any of the story-telling group.)

SELIM. O Mogu, now you know the story of the Slave and the Sultan.

MOGU. Yea, verily.

(Selim comes down the steps. The group talk and laugh amongst themselves. Mogu remains silent.)

SHEDID. Behold him seated on the step. How shall we approach him, my brother?

SHEDAD. I know not yet. He will be haughty with us.

SHEDID. On the contrary, he may look on us with benignity seeing we bring him the news of his elevation.

SHEDAD. It may be so. Oh, to think of that vagabond being given the place of Perozes the Vizier.

SHEDID. Hush, brother, do not speak of him as a vagabond.

ONE IN THE AUDIENCE. O Selim, relate the story of the Vagabond brought to the Feast.

SELIM. It is a familiar tale, and doubtless known to Mogu.

MOGU. None can relate it better than my master.

(Shedad and Shedid come towards the steps.
The audience disperse. All leave the scene except the fruit-seller, who goes down right, and Mogu, who remains seated on the step. Shedid and Shedad stand before him, bowing. Mogu spits out when they come near him.)

MOGU. Why do you stand before me, oppressors?

SHEDID. We bring you the tidings of your elevation, O Vizier.

SHEDAD. Your lordship has been given the place of Perozes, the Vizier.

MOGU (rising up). Do not weary yourselves devising mockeries, Shedad and Shedid.

(He goes towards the left.)

SHEDAD. We come to bid you to the banquet of the King.

MOGU. The beards of these men are grey, and yet they are prolific in deceit.

(Kasim-Feraj enters left. He carries a rich robe. He bows to Mogu.)

SHEDAD. My Lord Kasim-Feraj, speak to the Vizier, so that he may not go from the favour of the King.

MOGU. The desert will deliver me from your hands.

KASIM-FERAJ. Speak to us, Mogu, and inform us why you would go hence.

MOGU. Ye would pretend that Mogu, the vagabond, was Vizier and amongst the noble, and when ye had grown weary of this diversion, ye would have me beaten and tormented. I know ye take pleasure in mocking the outcast, but had I not listened to the stories I would most assuredly have been taken in the net.

(Servants have brought in various small tables. These are laid left. A flask of wine and a wide drinking vessel are left on one of the tables. Kasim-Feraj pours wine into the cup and brings it to Mogu.)

MOGU. Do not be amongst the mockers, my lord.

KASIM-FERAJ. I bring you the King's wine.

MOGU. I will drink it after you, my lord.

(Kasim-Feraj drinks the wine, and leaves the cup on the table.)

KASIM-FERAJ. And what will you have now, Mogu?

MOGU. Some fruit for my journey.

KASIM-FERAJ. Come hither, fruit-seller.

(The fruit-seller comes forward.)

KASIM-FERAJ. For the fruit that Mogu takes I will pay.

(The fruit-seller holds out the basket to Mogu.

Mogu strews dates on his person. He takes a large fruit into his hand.)

KASIM-FERAJ. Inform us, Mogu, why you would not drink the King's wine.

MOGU. I have heard that King's wine is sometimes drugged with bang.

KASIM-FERAJ. You have seen me drain the cup.

MOGU. My lord drained a cup verily, but the drug would be of no consequence to my lord, for he would not be mocked on his awakening.

KASIM-FERAJ. And if there were bang in the wine and Mogu drank it and were drugged he could not be deceived on his awakening once he is aware of the game already.

MOGU. That is true. I could not be deceived, for I am aware of the game already.

(He opens the fruit.)

MOGU. Verily, this is an astonishing thing.

KASIM-FERAJ. What is it, my lord.

MOGU. It is an event to astonish the mind.

(He holds something in his hand.)

SHEDAD (looking into his hand). There were two stones in the Vizier's fruit.

SHEDID. One of them is small and wrinkled, as if dried in the desert, and the other is large and purple, like a grape.

MOGU. I am astonished at the event of the fruit.

KASIM-FERAZ. It is apparent that the stones are an omen.

SHEDAD. They signify the two parts of the Vizier's life.

SHEDID. The one contracted and discoloured, the other full and richly hued.

(Shedad and Shedid stand together, at the right, talking.)

MOGU. A wonderful and extraordinary event has befallen me.

KASIM-FERAJ. Drink to the omen, Mogu.

(He fills the cup and brings it to Mogu. Mogu drinks.)

MOGU. Have you ever heard of an event more extraordinary?

KASIM-FERAZ. The event is indeed extraordinary, and shall be related to the King.

MOGU. This is good wine, my lord.

(Kasim-Feraj pours out another cup.)

KASIM-FERAJ (bringing Mogu the cup). It is the wine of Cyprus. This flask is the Beauty amongst Ten Thousand, the Virgin long kept at home.

(Mogu takes the cup.)

MOGU. Do not think I am without manners. I know how to behave in the presence of the noble. I drink to you, my lord. (He drinks.)

MOGU. I think my lord was amongst those who saw my daughter dance.

KASIM-FERAJ. I had not that privilege and that delight.

MOGU. The King seemed delighted with my daughter.

KASIM-FERAJ. Doubtless he has found great delight with her.

MOGU. And doubtless he will bestow something on the father of the slave-girl.

KASIM-FERAJ. O, my lord, believe——

MOGU. Nay, I will believe nothing that you tell me. What are they plotting there, Shedad and Shedid? Shedad and Shedid! The more I look upon them the

greater resemblance I see in them to the beaten ones of the cities.

(Kasim-Feraj fills a cup and drinks.)

KASIM-FERAJ. Will you not drink with me?

MOGU. Another cup, Kasim-Feraj. I will drink one cup more.

(Kasim-Feraj brings him a cup and Mogu drinks again.)

MOGU. Shedad and Shedid! One looks like a beaten porter and the other like a starvelling dustman. They'd look different if they were drunk with the wine of Cyprus.

(Shedad approaches, bearing the robe.)

MOGU. I drink in consideration of your daughter Shedad.

(He goes to the table. Shedad hands the robe to Kasim-Feraj.)

MOGU. The Beauty among Ten Thousand, the Virgin long kept at home.

(Kasim-Feraj puts the robe on Mogu. Mogu starts back terrified.)

KASIM-FERAJ. Hail, Vizier!

SHEDAD. O Most Illustrious!

SHEDID. O Vizier, live for ever!

(Mogu casts the robe on the ground, and breaks towards the back.)

MOGU (terrified). You shall not take me in the net. I will go away; the desert shall deliver me from your hands.

(He turns to Kasim-Feraj, and says in a pitiful voice.)

MOGU. O my lord, do not mock me! Have pity upon me, my lord. I go back to the desert without crust, without coin, without daughter! The sun is on the stripes of my heating, and my stomach devours itself for lack of food.

KASIM-FERAJ. Hush! Your daughter, the King's bride, approaches.

(Mogu is standing above the well. Kasim-Feraj, Shedad and Shedid are down left. Gazeleh,

attended by three slave-girls, enters left. She is veiled and elaborately dressed.)

GAZELEH. O my father, how wretched you seem!

MOGU. It is my daughter's voice.

(Gazeleh raises the veil and goes towards him.)

MOGU. You consort with those whose diversion it is to torment the outcast.

GAZELEH. Good fortune has turned your brain.

MOGU. Do not speak of good fortune. Evil are the things projected against me.

GAZELEH. I remembered you to Chosroes at the banquet last night, and the King has bestowed upon you the place of Perozes the Vizier. Is this an evil thing?

MOGU. I have heard the tales, and you cannot impose upon me.

GAZELEH. Do you not believe that the King has delighted in me?

MOGU. It may be so.

GAZELEH. He has bestowed upon me dresses and slaves, jewels and ornaments.

MOGU. If the King has been good to you, bestow something upon me. Give me back the string of coins that you took with you.

GAZELEH. O, my father, I have bestowed these upon one of my slave-girls.

MOGU. Have I not said it? You take the bread from the children's hands and give it to the dogs!

(Gazeleh goes to one of the slave-girls. The girl takes the string from her neck, and gives it to Gazeleh.)

MOGU. How easily these things come and go.

(Gazeleh gives the coins to Mogu.)

MOGU. How munificent is the Court! How lavish is the King! How fortunate is my child! If the King would provide me with a maintenance I would accept it, my child.

GAZELEH. The King will receive you, my father, and the Chambelarins will prepare you for the visit. And now I must go, for the King awaits me at the Pavilion.

(Gazeleh crosses with a slow and undulating walk. The slave-girls go with her, and they

are attended by Kasim-Feraj. They go off right. Shedad and Shedid follow, with many bows.)

MOGU (by himself). It may be that those who live in Courts, those who eat much food and drink much wine, become intoxicated in their reason and lose the support of their understanding. It may be that certain things have come to pass, and that I myself have attained to a degree of eminence.

(An old man appears at the back. He is standing on the steps of the other side; his head and the upper part of his body are visible. His figure is wasted and his beard overgrown.)

THE OLD MAN (bailing Mogu). O thou who hast prospered!

MOGU. What would you with Mogu, old man?

THE OLD MAN. I would bring him to the place where his destiny is shown.

MOGU. I will go with you, old man.

THE OLD MAN. Nay! The destined one is without possessions.

MOGU. I am without possessions.

THE OLD MAN. Nay, there is gold in your hand.

MOGU. It is a womanly ornament merely, a gift from my daughter. (The old man goes down a step.)

THE OLD MAN. I seek him who is without possessions.

MOGU. Why did you not call to me an hour ago?

THE OLD MAN. The calculation was not then complete.

MOGU. Would you cheat me out of my gold?

THE OLD MAN. O man, would you cheat your destiny?

MOGU. I will bury my gold and follow you.

(The old man goes down another step.)

THE OLD MAN. Where is he who is without possessions?

MOGU. I will cast my gold aside and follow you.

THE OLD MAN. Into the well!

MOGU. Into the well?

THE OLD MAN. The gold into the well. (There is a pause.)

MOGU. It shall be said that Mogu cast his gold into the well. (He throws the coins into the well.)

THE OLD MAN. Follow me!

(The old man goes down and disappears. Shedad and Shedid appear. Mogu takes up his staff that is lying against the well, and with a terrible gesture, motions them to the steps. Shedad and Shedid go up the steps and over. Mogu goes up the steps. He stands on the topmost one, in his bare feet, with the gorgeous robe coming to his knees, the staff in his hand. He goes down the steps on the other side, as Helenus and Menander enter on the left.)

MENANDER. The new Vizier!

HELENUS. It is a story to tell in Rome. Perhaps we could form some relations with this man.

HELENUS. I had thought of that Greek who went between the camps.

MENANDER. The Greek has attached himself to King Artavades. (The Ambassadors stay by the well.)

HELENUS. King Artavades seems to be making preparations. These preparations would not profit him except in the case of the death of Chosroes or a revolution in the Persian Camp, and neither death nor revolution seem imminent.

MEANDER. There is some discontent amongst the nobles consequent on the disappearance of their friends through the treasure quest.

HELENUS. Doubtless there are many figures outside our calculation.

MEANDER. Artavades hinted donatives to the army and to the Emperor.

HELENUS. We shall keep our army as near as possible for as long as possible. In case of revolution we must keep either side from gaining a decisive advantage. That is the only instruction I can give our general.

MENANDER. And to-night?

HELENUS. To-night we attend the banquet. We must keep sober. You must talk to the son of Chosroes while I watch Menzabalus.

MENANDER. The King's son will talk about horses.

HELENUS. I know we must keep sober, even if

they offer us Greek wine. Come, Menander. Ah, those Persian banquets!

(The Roman Ministers go off right. Servants enter left. The first two move small tables in a line from the left, and place food and wine upon them. They go out left. A figure is seen coming up the steps at the back. He comes down a step and another figure is seen behind him. They are blacks, and are garbed in white flowing garments. They are the Ethiopian captives, Yunan and Duban. Yunan is first, and carries a vessel in his hands. He places it on one of the tables. Duban carries a small empty brazier, which he puts near the table.)

YUNAN. I have brought the rose-water, O brother Duban!

DUBAN. And I, my brother, have brought the perfuming vessels.

YUNAN. O Duban, my brother, may we not sit here and ease ourselves for a while?

DUBAN. Indeed, I think we can give ourselves ease for a while.

(The two Ethiopians go to the back, and seat themselves on the lower step.)

DUBAN. Do you remember a saying of our country, Yunan?

YUNAN. What is the saying, my brother?

DUBAN. The day's work is to be done, but more excellent than the work of the day is the talk of the day's work by the evening's fire.

YUNAN. By the talk round the fire man is distinguished from the beasts. Poetry and story-telling are in this talk by the fire.

DUBAN. O Yunan, those in captivity are the beasts.

YUNAN. Last night, my brother, I had a dream.

DUBAN. What was your dream, my brother?

YUNAN. I dreamt that you and I and Zahal, our brother, were in our own country and engaged in the pastimes of our youth. Oh, it was beautiful, my dream! I thought that we glided down the river as in the days of our youth. I thought that the willow grew

lightly from the mud, and that green branches bent down to the stream.

DUBAN. Alas, alas!

YUNAN. And I thought that my brothers, Duban and Zahal, were happy and at peace.

DUBAN. I pour out my tears, for I think that we will never see the Spring in those happy places, my brother.

YUNAN. Lying awake, this thing seemed to me possible: that we might escape from the camp, and join the tribes of the desert, and so win our way back to the country of our youth.

DUBAN. Our brother Zahal has invention and resolve, and he might further our escape.

YUNAN. A word, my brother.

DUBAN. What is your word?

YUNAN. We must in no way awaken the animosity of the overseer of the slaves.

(They rise from the step. The head of a third Ethiopian appears. This is Zahal. He carries a bundle of aloes-wood for the brazier. Zahal is of greater bulk than the other captives. He puts the aloes-wood into the brazier.)

DUBAN. O brother Zahal.

ZAHAL. Hush, the Vizier approaches.

(He puts the aloes-wood into the brazier. The stand near the tables. Mogu enters on the right, followed by Shedad and Shedid. He has on the gorgeous robe, but his legs and feet are dusty.)

MOGU. It has been told me that my hand shall be over a King.

SHEDAD. The tables are spread.

SHEDID. We will wait upon our lord, the Vizier.

(Shedid dismisses the captives, who go back by the steps. Mogu sits down at the first table and begins to devour the food.)

MOGU. The country of the Greeks should be placed under tribute.

SHEDAD. Doubtless, my lord!

(Mogu goes on eating.)

MOGU. I say this because the wine comes from Cyprus, and Cyprus is in the country of the Greeks.

SLEDID. The travels of our lord have brought him knowledge.

(He draws more food.)

MOGU. In the country of the Greeks the women go about with faces unveiled.

(Shedad and Sledid receive this information with befitting wonder. Mogu goes to another table.)

MOGU. The King looked upon my daughter with great favour, and he wed her as he would wed the daughters of kings. (He eats.) This was brought about by my genius. I am under the protection of a very powerful genius.

SLEDAD. Our lord is, himself, good fortune.

(Mogu eats.)

MOGU. This genius came into existence at the same moment as I came into existence. . . . He touched this sphere again with the coming of my daughter. . . . For my sake he endowed her with beauty, intelligence, and grace of manner.

SLEDID. Divinely is she gifted!

MOGU. I was aware of it from the time my wife said "I bear a child."

(He goes to the third table.)

MOGU. I would have called the girl by a more grandiloquent name, but the women prevailed against me. (He eats.)

MOGU. Doubtless my genius will enable me to further the Empire of the Persians.

SLEDAD. How fortunate is our King!

MOGU. An excellent King; the borders of his Empire should be extended; his viziers should be from amongst the greatest of men.

(He fills up the vessel with wine. Standing up he drinks it.)

MOGU. I have drunk wine, Shedad.

(Shedad and Sledid cower before him.)

MOGU. You have sandals, Shedad! Strip them off and put them on my feet.

(Shedad takes off his sandals, and, stooping down, puts them on Mogu's feet. Mogu un

rolls Shedad's turban and puts it on his own head.)

SHEHAD (looking at his turban on Mogu's head). The jewels on the turban are small, but they may make the gift more acceptable to my lord.

MOGU. Has Shedid aught to give?

SHEHAD. If I might offer this ring to my lord.

(He gives the ring to Mogu, who puts it on his little finger.)

MOGU. What else have you to give?

SHEHAD. We will give what your lordship looks upon.

MOGU. Would you give me your lives?

SHEHAD. We must if our lord demands them.

MOGU. Would you give me your wives?

SHEHAD. Our lord would not make such a claim.

(Mogu goes back and stands on top step. People of the Camp pass from the left, paying homage to him. Afterwards they stand at the back right. A negro amongst them has a drum and two others have cymbals. Three servants of the royal household enter and range themselves down stage.)

SHEHAD. Presents, my lord Mogu, from the king of kings!

MOGU. I will look upon them, Shedad.

(He comes down. The first servant holds out a mitre of purple sewn with pearls.)

THE FIRST SERVANT. This is the mitre sent from the King.

(The crowd express their admiration. The negro beats on the drum. The second servant holds out a sword in scabbard.)

THE SECOND SERVANT. Here is the sword engraved with mystic names.

(Again the crowd express their admiration, and the negro again beats on the drum.)

MOGU. Ha, what is this? I have not seen the like of this before.

THE THIRD SERVANT. It is a mirror of brass.

(Mogu looks into the mirror while the cymbals are clashed.)

MOGU. This, then, is Mogu, the vizier of the King! The turban becomes you well, Mogu, and the robe also; but you are lean. Mogu, lean! A vizier may devour men.

(He turns round.)

MOGU. Who is there to wait upon me, Shedad and Shedid?

SHEDAD (crying out). O servants, bring the litter for the vizier of the King.

MOGU (raising his hands and crying out in a terrible voice). Why do you not hasten, slaves? Would you have the Vizier walk to the bath?

(Two slaves enter left bearing a litter. The litter is lowered, and Mogu steps in. He is raised up on the shoulders of the men.)

MOGU (from the litter.) There is one thing still on my mind.

SHEDAD. What is it, my lord?

MOGU. Bid the people be silent.

SHEDID. Silence, O people, the Vizier would speak!

(All are silent and attentive.)

MOGU. It has been said from old time, yea, it has been written in many books, that he who has survived his enemy even for an hour has happiness. Is this not true, O People?

SOME. We have heard it said.

OTHERS. We know it to be true.

MOGU. Therefore I will not enter the bath until Shedad and Shedid have been beaten. I, the Vizier, command you to lay hands on Shedad and Shedid.

(Shedad and Shedid are taken by some of the rabble and dragged across the steps.)

MOGU. Let them be beaten so that I may hear their groans before I go to the bath.

(Blows and groans are heard. A wild and barbaric music is set up.)

MOGU. Bearers, lower the Vizier.

(The litter is laid on the ground.)

MOGU. Let the sword of the enchantments be given to me.

(The sword is put into his hands. Mogu takes

it from the scabbard, and stands in the centre flashing it before him.)

MOGU. Mogu, Mogu, Mogu! Thy genius hath touched thee, Mogu! Thou hast triumphed, thou hast liberated thyself from the desert, thou hast become a terror to men. The Empire is thine, Mogu; the gold, the purple, the women. The world trembles at thy shadow.

(He goes into the litter. The bearers move right, but are forced back by the entrance of a Roman guard.)

THE ROMANS. Make way for the lord Helenus!

THE PERSIANS. Make way for Mogu!

THE ROMANS. Room for Cæsar's ministers!

MOGU. Room for Mogu, the Vizier of the King!

(The litter is driven backward and forward amid cries of "Cæsar, Cæsar!" "Mogu, Mogu!" The litter is forced through.)

CURTAIN.

THE THIRD ACT—THE FIRST SCENE.

(Inside the pavilion adjoining the bath. There is a hanging curtain shutting off the left. The exit is in back right where the tent is looped up. There is a mattress in the middle of the pavilion; Mogu is sleeping on the mattress, cushions under his head and shoulders. He is tended by two slave-girls, Moon-of-Love and Food-of-Hearts. Food-of-Hearts sits at his head, to the left, fanning him; Moon-of-Love is rubbing his feet. She sits to the right. Mogu awakens. He remains a while passive. He raises himself, snuffing.)

MOGU. I do not smell the odour of the aloes-wood.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. O woe to thee, Moon-of-Love!

MOGU. Nay, I grant you indemnity. I now smell the odour of aloes-wood.

(He turns to the slave-girl at his head.)

MOGU. What name, slave-girl, have they bestowed upon you?

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. Food-of-Hearts they name me.

MOGU. Thou hast my permission to sit on the mattress, Food-of-Hearts.

(She sits on the mattress, and Mogu toys with the bracelets on her arm.)

MOGU. My story is wonderful and should be engraved on plates of gold, and kept in the treasure-house of kings. I was carried to the bath, and I disported myself in a tank the water of which had been infused with rose-water. The fountain played upon me then, and thereafter I sat on cushions and was rubbed with the bag.

MOON-OF-LOVE. O Food-of-Hearts!

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. What would you say, Moon-of-Love?

MOGU. Thou hast permission.

MOON-OF-LOVE. Doth not our lord speak of these things with an eloquent tongue?

MOGU (to Moon-of-Love). What name is bestowed upon you?

MOON-OF-LOVE. Moon-of-Love, O lord!

MOGU. You have a sweet voice, Moon-of-Love. You also have permission and may sit upon the mattress.

(Moon-of-Love sits at his knees, Mogu plays with her hair.)

MOGU. My story is wonderful, as I have said. The man who rubbed me with the bag showed me the multitude of impure particles that adhered to my skin.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. O Moon-of-Love, our lord makes common things remarkable.

MOGU. You have not permission to speak thus, Food-of-Hearts. These impure particles were sufficient to astonish the mind by reason of their multitude and magnitude. I require you, Food-of-Hearts, to rub my feet; Moon-of-Love, sit closer to me.

(Food-of-Hearts goes round and rubs Mogu's feet.)

MOGU. Greatly do I regret the loss of my shirt. It

was as a caravan, and could have crossed the desert of itself.

(He puts his arm round Moon-of-Love.)

MOGU. Verily, Moon-of-Love, I think you are of more excellent form than the damsel at my feet.

MOON-OF-LOVE. I am younger than my sister, my lord.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. O Moon-of-Love, does not the love of the bride extinguish all other desires in the breast of my lord?

MOGU. I need not go to Shedad's daughter until the sixth hour.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. Does not the marriage contract take place before the sixth hour?

MOGU. Verily I have left it to Kasim-Feraj, the tailor-astrologer, to arrange these things.

(Kasim-Feraj enters. He carries in Mogu's outer robes.)

KASIM-FERAJ. My lord, the time for the contract of marriage will soon reach the auspicious hour. Saturn is about to be conjoined with Venus.

MOGU (standing up). I require you to robe me, Kasim-Feraj.

(Kasim-Feraj puts on the outer garments.)

MOGU. Will not Shedad come before us here?

KASIM-FERAJ. It would be more dignified on your part to go in state to meet the bride's father.

MOGU. Yea, but I shall not advance beyond the well to meet Shedad.

KASIM-FERAJ. Shedad, Shedid, and the great men of the Court will await your lordship at the well.

MOGU. O slave-girls.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. We listen, my lord.

MOGU. She whom I am about to wed is of the daughters of the rich; she is one who has been kept secluded for such as I.

(Food-of-Hearts bring over the sandals.)

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. O my lord, grant me indemnity.

MOGU. Thou has indemnity, Food-of-Hearts.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. Permit me, the most remote, to be present at the display of the bride.

MOGU. Thou hast permission, Food-of-Hearts.

(Food-of-Hearts puts a sandal on Mogu's foot.

Moon-of-Love takes up the other sandal.)

MOON-OF-LOVE. Permit me also, my lord.

MOGU. Thou hast permission also, Moon-of-Love.

(Moon-of-Love puts on the other sandal.)

MOGU. Afterwards you shall sit at my head and feet and fan me and rub my feet, and I shall manifest favour towards you.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS. O my lord, thou has gratified the most remote.

MOON-OF-LOVE. Thou has delighted us with thy magnanimity. May thy state be such that the gall-bladder of the lion will burst with envy.

(The slave-girls fold up the mattress and take up the cushions. They go out left.)

MOGU. Kasim-Feraj!

KASIM-FERAJ. I listen, my lord!

MOGU. I would advance towards Shedad and the great men of the Court with a haughty and conceited gait.

KASIM-FERAJ. O my lord, I will walk before, and you may deign to take pattern by my steps.

MOGU. Therefore, walk before me with an arrogant step!

(Kasim-Feraj walks in a stilted manner.)

MOGU. Walk from the mattress to the door.

(Kasim-Feraj walks from the mattress. Mogu follows him, exaggerating the walk.)

MOGU. Thus do the great approach their menials.

(He goes out. The scene closes.)

THE SECOND SCENE.—BY THE WELL.

(Chroses and Nuseyr pass, returning from the chase. Each carries a falcon. There is an attendant with them.)

NUSEYR. Mogu, I am told, hath become enamoured of the bath, and it is doubtful whether the display of the bride can draw him from it.

CHOSROES. What presents shall we send our father-in-law on the occasion of his espousal?

NUSEYR. The basket of Syrian peaches.

CHOSROES. Nay, that is a gift for Cæsar.

NUSEYR. Let the father of Gazeleh be placed above Cæsar. And with the peaches should go the basket of the lilies of Damascus.

CHOSROES. Ah, but these white blossoms are perfect loveliness!

NUSEYR. And with the peaches of Syria and the lilies of Damascus should go a jar of the wine of Cyprus.

CHOSROES. Nuseyr, your habit of thinking lyrically becomes expensive to me. But the presents shall be as you have said. (He gives the falcon to the attendant, and speaks to him.) Go to the steward and tell him to send the rarities of the pavilion to Mogu, the Vizier, as a present from the King. And let the steward be aware that these are rarities indeed, and to be sent by trusted messengers. Inform him that if even a blossom of the lilies goes astray we will have him impaled outside the Camp, together with forty of his kinsmen.

(Nuseyr hands his falcon to the attendant also.

The attendant makes obeisance and goes out left.)

CHOSROES. Nuseyr, you know what I await?

NUSEYR. Messengers from the desert with news of the treasure recovered.

CHOSROES. Yea, when the treasure comes under my hand we will return and rebuild Shira as our sacred city.

NUSEYR. May my lord have peace in Shira!

CHOSROES. I will build high towers in the city, and astronomers will come and observe new courses and tell us of the austere ways of the heavens. Also the Greek philosophers will come to us and tell of the mysteries of lines and figures. And I've had a message from one across the desert, from an Arabian who maintains that God is one. He shall come also and discuss this with Greeks, Indians, and Egyptians.

NUSEYR. Your name will be illustrious amongst the Kings of Persia.

CHOSROES. I will put away the harem that en-

cumbers my soul, and I will live with Gazeleh, the child of the desert.

NUSEYR. Observe the length of that shadow, my lord.

CHOSROES. Someone approaches. Come Nuseyr, tell me more of your Book of the Beauties.

NUSEYR. I will put into my poem the women who have come unto the Kings of Persia from the early days; not all of them as you know, but those amongst them who have left a sense of something exquisite. I will put together those who have been strange in their beauty or romance, those who have had delightful names, or who were curious by race or manner. This shall be called the Book of the Beauties.

(Chosroes and Nuseyr go out together, right. The shadow seen in the shadow of Shakalik, the camel-driver. He enters left. Shakalik is clad in a single garment that is dusty and torn. His beard is long and shaggy. He has the expression of one whose mind is on terrible things.)

SHAKALIK. I am one of those whom Chosroes sent into the desert on account of the stolen treasure. I clung to my camel, and my camel brought me back, but as for the others, they have perished in the desert. Those who have golden armour, the nobles of Persia, have perished. In the desert I heard the nobles curse the King. Now all the spoils are in the sand, the crown and the sword, the spices and the wine, the figured cloth and the embroidered cloth, the jewels of the sceptre and the throne. The spoils are in the sand, and I have come back to the Camp of the King with the waste of the desert in my heart.

(Shakalik passes the well and stumbles on towards the Camp. The three Ethiopian captives, Duban, Yunan and Zahal, enter right. They carry flat baskets on their heads. In these baskets are the presents from Chosroes to Mogu. Duban comes first, then Zahal, and then Yunan.)

YUNAN. O my brothers, is it well that we should

hasten seeing that when these presents are delivered we shall no longer be together?

DUBAN. We are wont to make stay by this well.

YUNAN. Let us set down our burthens here and delight each other with the things that we carry.

(They set down the baskets and squat before them. Zahal is in the middle, Duban to the left, and Yunan to the right. Duban lifts up a jar from the basket before him.)

DUBAN. O my brothers, behold this! It is a jar of wine of Cyprus!

ZAHAL (lifting up an inner basket). Behold these They are precious peaches of Syria!

YUNAN (lifting up the inner basket). And these most lovely blossoms are the narcissus of Damascus!

YUNAN. O Zahal, often have we sought for you, but the sight of the captive was denied to his brethern.

DUBAN. Often have I said to Yunan, if Zahal were with us, he would give us comfort and hope.

YUNAN. Why are you silent, my brother?

ZAHAL. I have seen cranes fly over my head, and I knew them to be of the tribe that stand by the banks of the beloved stream.

YUNAN. We are of the unfortunate race of men and have no wings for flight.

ZAHAL. Then have I thrown myself upon my face and have let my heart tell me a tale of deliverance.

DUBAN. What is the tale that has deliverance in it?

ZAHAL. I have told myself that the Camp of the Persians was overwhelmed, and that we, diving under the water, as it were, slipped away to freedom.

YUNAN. And how did the Camp of the Persians become overwhelmed?

ZAHAL. I have told myself that the Romans attacked the Camp and prevailed against the Persians.

DUBAN. Nay, that will not happen, my brother!

ZAHAL. And I have told myself that the nobles became incensed against the King and wrought the confusion stirring against him.

YUNAN. O Zahal, delight our ears by relating some thing that is possible!

ZAHAL. I have listened to what the Eunuchs of the

harem say, and after hearing them I have told myself that the friends of the Queen plotted mischief against Chosroes. Sometimes—and this is a terrible thing—I have told myself that some man brought steel against the King and that Chosroes was slain.

DUBAN. Verily, captives harbour in their minds that which is indescribably terrible.

YUNAN. O brother, relate unto us what happened on the death of him whose name shall not be breathed.

(The face of Zahal becomes rigid, his eyes roll, his hand stretches out to the peaches.)

ZAHAL. The nobles and soldiers were in confusion.

YUNAN. What else, my brother?

ZAHAL (drawing a peach towards him). The slaves prevailed against the stewards.

DUBAN. O my brother, relate this thing further.

ZAHAL. In the darkness of the night we sped away.

(He devours the peaches, while the others gaze on him overwhelmed with terror.)

DUBAN. O woe for us, Yunan.

YUNAN. Our brother has devoured one of the peaches of Syria.

ZAHAL. O hasten brothers, present your gifts, and be not spoken of with me, who am doomed to death on account of the destruction of the peach.

YUNAN. Nay, we will not leave you, brother.

DUBAN. Rather will we doom ourselves with you.

(He takes up a stone and breaks the wine jar
Yunan takes up the narcissus and scatters the blossoms around.)

YUNAN. O blossoms of the narcissus, bear death for me also.

(Duban and Yunan cover their faces with their hands. Zahal gazes outward.)

DUBAN. O my brothers, the river, the river! See with what mystery it flows!

YUNAN. Behold, the green branches of the willow bear themselves above the burthen of the flood!

DUBAN. Not yet is the time of the water lilies. And lo, we glide down the stream, three brethern of the one household.

YUNAN. And amongst the torrents who are hardier

than we. Lo, our boat is in the torrent that is called the Mother of Stones!

DUBAN. Pull now and our toil is over ere the desert-lark ends his strain.

YUNAN. O children of the stream!

DUBAN. O strong armed heroes!

YUNAN. I do not hear the voice of Zahal.

ZAHAL. Who will put my lance in my hand?

DUBAN. What would you do with your lance, my brother?

ZAHAL. I would kill. I would make the confusion of the torrent so that we might bear ourselves away.

YUNAN. Whom would you kill, my brother?

ZAHAL. He is that is greatest. I would kill Chosroes, the King.

YUNAN. O my brother, put the oath upon us, so that we may share the peril.

(Zahal stands up and grasps the hands of his brothers.)

ZAHAL. The peach has been eaten, the wine-jar has been broken, the blossoms have been scattered. And therefore we, the children of the Stream, must kill Chosroes, the King.

DUBAN. By my soul of memories, I swear to kill the King.

YUNAN. By my love for you twain, I swear to kill the King.

ZAHAL. We have neither dagger nor lance, but resolve will put weapons into our hands. Each of us will go to the parties in the Camp. If they do not cut us down as madmen they will give us weapons.

DUBAN. To whom shall I go, my brother?

ZAHAL. To the friends of the Queen!

(Duban embraces his brothers and goes right.)

YUNAN. To whom shall I go, my brother?

ZAHAL. To the friends of the King's son.

(Yunan embraces Zahal and goes left.)

ZAHAL. O nobles of Persia, who are weary of waiting of your friends, I go to you.

(Shedad enters, right. He brings with him a man with a drum.)

SHEDAD. The Vizier has left the bath, he is coming

towards us, and the music will be a source of gratification to him.

(The man makes several turns on the stage beating the drum. Some of Shedad's servants enter, bringing a dais, which they set up right. Several people, richly arrayed, enter. They salute Shedad, and take their places standing down right.)

ONE OF THE NOTABLES. O Uncle, we have come to witness the contract of marriage between the fortunate Vizier and Jemileh, your daughter.

SHEDAD. This shall be a source of distinction for ye.

(He unfolds a long scroll and reads down, looking thoughtfully the while.)

SHEDAD (holding the scroll and addressing the drummer). Beat and continue to beat; the Vizier approaches.

(The drummer beats on the drum. Kasim-Feraj, a staff in his hand, enters, walking with an arrogant gait. He preceeds Mogu. Mogu is dressed in a gorgeous flowing robe. Shedad and the notables bow before him.)

MOGU (speaking to Kasim-Feraj). Amongst those, the notables of the Empire, is one who solicits my alliance through union with his daughter. He is one to be treated with respect and veneration.

(He stands before the first man in the row. Keeping his body rigid, Mogu jerks his head three times.)

KASIM-FERAJ. O my lord, the noble whom you thus salute is not the father of the bride.

MOGU (affecting astonishment): Is this not Shedad, the chamberlain of the King?

(He stands before the second man and salutes him in a similar manner.)

KASIM-FERAJ. O my lord, again your art mistakes in the person of Shedad.

MOGU. What! Is not this the father of the bride?

(He stands before the third man, and salutes in the same manner.)

KASIM-FERAJ. O my lord, again you are mistaken.
(Mogu affects to look round him. He sees Shedad, who is standing apart in excess of vexation.)

MOGU. Inform us, Kasim-Feraj, if this undistinguished person is the father of Jemileh, who has been described as the mistress of moon-like beauties?

KASIM-FERAJ. My lord gazes on Shedad, his future father-in-law.

(Mogu looks fixedly at Shedad.)

MOGU. Thou hast indemnity, Shedad.

(He turns to Kasim-Feraj.)

MOGU. I would, Kasim-Feraj, that you recited some tales or performed some extraordinary action before us.

KASIM-FERAJ. Why do you ask this, my lord?

MOGU. My body is, as it were, dampened, and my mind is remote from business.

KASIM-FERAJ. O my lord, I crave that you look with an eye of benignity on the notables assembled here.

MOGU. Is there one amongst them who can perform extraordinary actions?

KASIM-FERAJ. Nay, my lord.

MOGU. Do they stand before us with regard to matters connected with the Empire?

KASIM-FERAJ. They stand before us in regard to the marriage of my lord.

MOGU (turning away). Kasim-Feraj, I would have you remind me to drink a cup of Greek wine in the morning after the bath.

KASIM-FERAJ. I crave my lord's attention.

MOGU. Nay, Kasim-Feraj——

KASIM-FERAJ. The business of the marriage contract, my lord.

MOGU. We will gratify you, Kasim-Feraj. Shedad, draw nigh to us.

(With his staff he indicates the place where Shedad is to stand. A man has entered and has been sepaking with Kasim-Feraj. Kasim-Feraj approaches Mogu.)

KASIM-FERAJ. Ambassadors approach desiring to salute the Vizier.

MOGU. Is it really so, Kasim-Feraj?

KASIM-FERAJ. It is so indeed, my lord.

MOGU. We will receive the ambassadors. Shedad, it is become incumbent upon me to attend to the affairs of the Empire.

(Shedad goes back amongst the notables. They stand on the right-hand side of the stage. Officers, soldiers, and men of the Camp have entered. They occupy the left side. Mogu is in the centre. Two men dressed in long, many folding garments enter. One is distinguished in bearing and wears a sword; his turban and the covering along the side of his face conceal his features. The other is small and supple, with smooth manners. Apparently he is a Greek. He advances with arms outstretched bowing to Mogu. The man of distinguished bearing imitates his companion's actions, but remains standing apart.)

MOGU. He that is acquainted with our language has permission to come forward.

(The Greek advances.)

MOGU. From what people do ye come?

THE GREEK. We are ambassadors of the Arabians. O fortunate Vizier!

MOGU. And what words have ye for us?

THE GREEK. O fortunate Vizier, your elevation hath been foretold to us by the astrologers of our own country.

MOGU. We listen to ye, O suppliants of the Arabians.

THE GREEKS. The people of our remote province would deem that their land had attained dignity indeed if the fortunate Vizier would attend a banquet that we are about to prepare.

MOGU. This does not conflict with our dignity, and we will attend.

THE GREEK. O fortunate Vizier, we are aware that your magnificence is wont to associate with those of the blood royal. We would be honoured, indeed, if the King's son would attend with you. We have excellent horses, and the King's son would surely be gratified by the sight of these.

MOGU. It may be that we shall address the King's son on the subject.

THE GREEK. We have certain rarities with us, and the possession of some of these might gratify the Vizier.

MOGU. We will attend the banquet of wine.

(The Greek falls on his knees, holding up his arms. The loose sleeves slip down, revealing the arms.)

THE GREEK. O fortunate Vizier, our province hath become a kingdom only through your condescension.

(His head is still bowed. Mogu glances along the bare arms.)

MOGU. Have ye any other business besides preparing a banquet, O Ambassadors from the Arabians!

THE GREEK. We shall not discuss affairs until the third day.

MOGU. I am looking at the clasp of your cloak. Is it of gold of Arabia?

(He puts his hand suddenly on the cloak, tearing it off with the tunic.)

MOGU. O dog of a spy, would you persuade us that the Arabians leave marks of chains upon the arms of their ambassadors? Would you persuade us that they beat their ambassadors with sticks so that the marks of many beatings are visible on the back?

(All are astonished. The man of distinguished bearing draws his sword and rushes at Mogu. He is seized by the soldiers, and held struggling. Some of the notables seize the Greek and draw him to the right. Mogu gazes on the man with the sword.)

MOGU. Verily, this is a person of distinction, this man with the sword.

AN OFFICER. O Vizier, reveal his name and rank to us.

MOGU. Presently I shall do this. Look upon this man, Shedad, and inform us of his condition.

(Shedad approaches and looks on the man whose turbans and wrappings have fallen.)

SHEDAD. O sight to astonish mankind!

MOGU. Shedad is amazed at the greatness of him whom Mogu has taken in the net.

SHEDAD. O event to be chronicled in the history of kings!

MOGU. Speak, Shedad! Thou hast permission to inform the assembly of this person's distinction.

SHEDAD. This is none other than a king. This is Artavades, the King.

(All are astonished.)

MOGU. Said I not so? Did I not inform you such was the case? Have ye not seen how Mogu, the Vizier, takes a king in his net?

ONE OF THE NOTABLES. It is true that this man has a demon that instructs him in all things.

A MAN. O fortunate Vizier!

ANOTHER. O strength and power of the Persians!

MOGU. Ye have not seen how Mogu takes a king in his net. This is an enemy to Chosroes. I will present him to Chosroes, who will set him up at the banquet to be mocked by all.

A MAN. O friend of the bestower of wealth and dignity.

MOGU. I shall sit by the King's shoulder at the banquet. Nay, I shall give a feast and solicit the King to attend. Is not this my wedding night, and shall I not give a banquet to Chosroes and the lords of the Persian Empire. The King will make me presents of slaves, male and female, black and white, for I am possessed of but few slaves. He will bestow a treasure on me and advance me in dignity.

SHEDAD. And what of the marriage-contract, my lord?

MOGU. I will wed Jemileh, your daughter, since she is the fairest of women. Deliver unto us the contract of marriage.

(Shedad hands him the scroll.)

ONE OF THE NOTABLES. O my lord, mount the dais so that we may pay homage to you.

(He mounts the dais, and the crowd gathers round him. Halters have been put around the necks of Artavades and the Greek, and one man holds the King and the spy like hounds in a leash. Mogu turns and goes to the dais,

while the crowd divides to let him pass. He mounts the dais.)

THE PEOPLE. O Vizier, whose presence is better than food or sleep!

MOGU (from the dais). O people, I weary of your clamour! I would that it were possible for me to remain in conversation with the beautiful slave-girls. I would that the King had bestowed upon me a province small and remote.

KASIM-FERAJ (coming forward). O people, abase yourselves before the Vizier!

THE CROWD. We are under the sandals of the Vizier.

KASIM-FERAJ. O people, this Vizier is one who hath been fed upon the milk of Wisdom and who hath been rocked in the cradle of Experience!

THE CROWD. May he live for ever!

KASIM-FERAJ. Wherefore should we conceal the extraordinary qualities of the best of the Viziers? He is one amongst the tribes of mankind.

THE PEOPLE. May the day and the night proceed from him!

KASIM-FERAJ. The former glories of Persia will be eclipsed by the glories rising on Mogu's ministry, for it hath been revealed unto them who read the signs that the Empire of the Romans will be covered by his shadow.

THE PEOPLE. O Vizier, live for ever!

KASIM-FERAJ. O people, listen to words of great import concerning the Vizier!

MOGU. Kasim-Feraj.

KASIM-FERAJ. My lord!

MOGU. One has entered who does not cry out, "Vizier, live for ever"!

KASIM-FERAJ. Who is there who does not cry out for the Vizier?

MOGU. Behold the man!

(He points to the one who is standing apart, his face covered with his robe.)

KASIM-FERAJ. O man, wherefore dost thou not pay homage to the fortunate Vizier?

THE MAN. The King is dead! Chosroes has been slain!

(Mogu goes down from the dais and lays hold on the man.)

MOGU. O man, are you mad, that you would shame the Vizier by speaking falsehood?

(He casts Mogu from him.)

THE MAN. I speak truth. Chosroes has been slain.

(He strides out, right. All are overcome by astonishment. Artavades and the spy escape in the confusion. The crowd, turning round, stand in expectation. Darib enters hurriedly.)

A SOLDIER. What is your tidings, Darib?

DARIB. Soldiers, to your tents! Know that Chosroes has been slain!

A SOLDIER. Speak, Darib, and tell us how the King has been slain.

DARIB. I know not, for no proclamation has been made. It is said that they were slaves of the palace.

(The soldiers hurry away; the notables crowd after the soldiers; Kasim-Feraj goes too. Mogu and Shedad are left together. They remain watching each other.)

MOGU. That which hath happened is a calamity that affects us both. I do not repudiate my union with you through marriage with your daughter.

SHEDAD. O my lord, the purifications and mourning which will take place hereafter will interfere with the ceremony of marriage.

MOGU. Nevertheless we shall aid each other, Shedad!

SHEDAD. If that is possible.

(Shedid enters from left side.)

MOGU. A fair and friendly greeting to you, Shedid.

(Shedid passes Mogu and goes to his brother.)

SHEDID (to Shedad). Roman soldiers have been introduced into the Camp. Brother, let us seclude ourselves until the King has been proclaimed.

MOGU. This is a calamity that affects us all.

(Shedad and Shedid are in earnest conversation.)

MOGU. Doubtless, my good fortune will help you to establish yourselves.

SHEDID. Doubtless.

SHEDAD (to his brother). Whither?

SHEDID. Roman soldiers come. This way, my brother!

MOGU. Whither would ye go, Shedad and Shedid?

SHEDAD. We have many affairs to attend.

MOGU. Let us be together.

SHEDAD. Our young men await us.

SHEDID (significantly). They are armed, my lord!

(Shedid and Shedad go out, right. Mogu is alone.)

MOGU. I might present myself at the harem and demand jewels and coins from my daughter, or I might seclude myself in the pavilion. I go towards my daughter. (He goes right, then pauses.) Nay, I go to the pavilion. (He turn left, and meets three Roman soldiers who are entering.)

(What follows is in pantomime. One Roman soldier goes back right and stands on guard with his spear raised. Mogu goes up to the back and stands with his back turned. The two Roman soldiers who are last draw each other's attention to Mogu. They indicate the richness of his dress. Then one of them claps his hands loudly, and the sentinel turns his back. The other two come up behind Mogu and hurry him off. The Roman soldier resumes sentry duty. Helenus and Menander enter, left.)

MENANDER. Anastatius has already appointed a guard for this place.

HELENUS. Ah, our excellent general! You will report, Menander, that the King Artavades has agreed to the donation to the army and the Emperor.

MENANDER. How fortunate that Artavades rejoined us.

HELENUS. It was still more fortunate that Cleo-
roes son is too drunk to have the proclamation carried out.

MENANDER. We could have Artavades proclaimed as King of the Persians at once.

HELENUS. Not at once, Menander. Let us give to the son of Chosroes time to become sober. The balance at present is in favour of Artavades. Let us give the King's son his chance.

MENANDER. It is a pity that our friend, Nuseyr, did not survive this revolution.

HELENUS. Ah, is Nuseyr the subject for an elegy?

MENANDER. He was out of favour with the Queen, as you know, and she had him assassinated on the death of his patron!

HELENUS. My Nuseyr, greatly do I fear that your songs are now in eternity. Poor Nuseyr! His mother was a Greek, as you know, and he had quite an appreciation for our erotic poets.

(They pass towards the right. The sentinel salutes.)

HELENUS. Soldier, I commend your watch to the guardians of the Roman state.

(Helenus and Menander go off right. Pantomime. The two Roman soldiers come back with Mogu's raiments as spoil. The sentinel comes down. The three sit in the centre and divide the spoil, cutting off the edging with their swords. The two Ethiopians, Duban and Yunan, enter, right. They cross the stage and stand left.)

DUBAN. Here will we wait Zahal, our brother.

YUNAN. And we are safe here, for we are instruments still warm in the hand of destiny.

(Duban points to a red glare in the sky.)

DUBAN. What great destruction hath the captives wrought on the Camp of the Persians!

YUNAN. Behold, the King's pavilion is in flames.

DUBAN. And the bath and all the pleasant places have been utterly destroyed.

(Zahal enters, right.)

ZAHAL. The Queen gives us protection. She directs us to a place on the river where a boat is in readiness. She bids us go in peace, seeing that it is manifest we were directed to the event.

DUBAN. O Zahal, tell us about this boat.

ZAHAL. It floats on the river west of the Camp, and the sails and oars are in readiness.

YUNAN. We will return, as the cranes fly back, to our own land.

DUBAN. But far, far, we must go before we see the patch cultivated by our people and the beans growing out on the river.

DUBAN. And when we land the pigeons will fly down from their towers and flutter around us.

ZAHAL. O beloved birds! many generations do ye number, since we, three brothers of one household, were taken into captivity.

(The three captives go off, left. ~Pantomime: The Roman soldiers conceal their booty. The trumpet sounds. The soldiers arise, stand in order, and march off left. The stage is left vacant. Mogu re-enters. He has been spoiled of his garment, and has been clad only in the inner single garment, which is now torn and dusty. The sandals have been taken off his feet and the mitre off his head.)

MOGU. Artavades has been made king over the Persians and I am in peril of the stakes. Would that I could draw Gazeleh to me; then might I depart with a portion of the treasure that the King bestowed upon her. (He strikes his foot against the broken jar and cries out in a rage.) My curse upon you, jar, that has wounded my foot! My curse upon you, soldiers, who have despoiled me! My curse be on him who will sit in my place and have the Vizier's ease and delight! And my curse be upon the Empire of the Persians and the Empire of the Romans; may the sands of the desert overwhelm them both!

(He sits down to nurse his wounded foot. Gazeleh enters from the right. She is meanly clad.)

GAZELEH. O my father!

MOGU. It is Gazeleh! O my daughter, my heart knocks at my ribs with the violence of my expectation!

GAZELEH. What is thine expectation, O my father?

MOGU. Hast thou been prudent, my daughter?

Hast thou brought any recompense from the treasure of the King?

GAZELEH. Alas, I have had to flee for my life, and as for jewels and ornaments, they were plundered from me.

MOGU. Wullahy! I have raised unto myself those who are barren in enterprise. I am hungry, my daughter.

GAZELEH. I also am hungry.

(Mogu rises and raises his hand towards what stretches back.)

MOGU. The way of the desert is before us.

(Mogu and Gazeleh stand regarding the desert.

Hafiz, the Haschish-eater, enters, and stands before them.)

HAFIZ. O Mogu!

(Mogu turns.)

MOGU. It is the Haschish-eater.

HAFIZ. What does your haschish say to you, Mogu?

MOGU. You see before you one to whom marvellous and terrible things have happened. To-day I was Vizier clad in cloth of gold, and sat judging the case of kings, and now I go back to the desert hungry and an outcast.

HAFIZ. O brother, I also have worn the diadem and been in the dust; the sun has been on the wounds of my beating, and the arms of the beautiful slave-girls have encircled me.

MOGU. Bestow a coin upon me, Hafiz.

(Hafiz gives him a coin.)

HAFIZ. O Mogu, remember this in a thousand years.

MOGU. Why, O Hafiz?

HAFIZ. In a thousand years you shall regain your power, then I shall stand before you and say, "O my lord, grant that the women of a certain region be given to me as my slave women."

MOGU. The women of the region of Yemen, is it not, Hafiz?

HAFIZ. Nay, that was a thousand years ago. The women I desire to live by the slow waters of the Zarahapla, in the regions near Abyssinia. They have woven

their huts of reeds, and without curtains they recline, and the heart of the passer-by is made empty by desire.

MOGU. O Gazeleh, crave a coin from the Haschish-eater.

(Gazeleh holds out her hand, and Hafiz bestows a coin on her.)

HAFIZ. The hour of sobriety approaches, yet I would talk to you about these women. They call no man husband; their lives are spent making love more subtle and beauty more elaborate. They think not on the after-world of Heaven and Hell, for they are descended from Lilith and Ridwan, an angel from Paradise.

MOGU. Give me the coin, Gazeleh. To-night we shall sleep in the dry bed of the river and the morning we shall eat in the town.

(Mogu and Gazeleh go back towards the desert.

Mogu turns and salutes Hafiz.)

MOGU. Farewell, Hafiz, son of Illusion.

HAFIZ. O Mogu, farewell! farewell for a thousand years!

(Hafiz stands watching them. Mogu and Gazeleh are seen going far back towards the desert.)

CURTAIN.

APPENDIX.

(a) In the printed version the dialogue between Darib and Selim is abridged as compared with the original text.

(b) The following conversation on page 14 has been inserted :

MENANDER. Be careful that your epic is not stolen, Helenus.

NUSEYR. I have heard that there is in Rome a freed-man who has put forward your work as his own.

HELENUS. I have heard of the fellow. Does not his name reek of garlic?

NUSEYR. Silence, Helenus! The law forbids that his name be mentioned.



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